

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

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FM AMEMBASSY MBABANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7998

INFO AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY MASERU

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMCONSUL LOURENCO MARQUES

C O N F I D E N T I A L MBABANE 0823

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EAID, EAIR, ELTN, PFOR, CA, CH, IR, MZ, RH, SF, WZ

SUBJECT: SWAZILAND SEEKS ALTERNATIVE OUTLETS TO SEA

1. I CALLED ON MINISTER WORKS, POWER AND COMMUNICATIONS
DR. ALLEN NXUMALO TO DISCUSS SWAZI PLANNING IN THE TRANSPORT
AND COMMUNICATIONS FIELDS IN THE LIGHT OF RECENT POLITICAL
DEVELOPMENTS IN THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN REGION. CONVERSATION
COVERED (1) PROPOSED CLOSURE OF MOZAMBIQUE PORTS TO RHODESIAN
TRANSIT TRADE AND ITS IMPLICATION OFR SWAZILAND, (2) GOS
DECISION TO DEVELOP ALTERNATIVE RAIL OUTLET TO PORT OF
RICHARD'S BAY IN SOUTH AFRICA, (3) EVENTUAL SOUTH AFRICAN
LINK UP WITH THE EXISTING SWAZILAND RAIL LINE TO MOZAMBIQUE,
(R) SWAZI DECISION TO ESTABLISH INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT AND
AIRLINE, (5) SWAZI AGREEMENT WITH SOUTH AFRICA FOR TAKE
OVER OF ROAD TRANSPORT LINK TO SOUTH AFRICAN RAILHEADS.

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2. CLOSURE OF MOZAMBIQUE PORTS TO RHODESIAN TRANSIT TRADE. DR. NXUMALO TOLD ME HE WAS GOING TO MOZAMBIQUE MAY 16 TO DISCUSS THE IMPLICATION OF THE PROPOSED CLOSURE OF MOZAMBIQUE PORTS TO THODESIAN TRANSIT TRADE. HE NOTED THAT SWAZILAND WAS EXPERIENCING DIFFICULTY IN SHIPPING ITS IRON ORE THROUGH THE PORT OF LOURENCO MARQUES. MOZAMBIQUE WAS HANDLING ONLY FIVE OR SIX TRAINLOADS OF ORE PER DAY; IT HAD AGREED TO HANDLE EIGHT, OR 8,000 TONS. HE SAID THE CLOSURE OF THE MOZAMBIQUE PORTS TO RHODESIAN TRANSIT TRADE SHOULD FREE CAPACITY AND EASE EXISTING BOTTLENECKS TO SWAZILAND AND SOUTH AFRICAN TRAFFIC. NXUMALO SAID HE WANTED CONFIRMATION OF THIS FROM THE MOZAMBICAN AUTHORITIES. HE WILL ALSO DISCUSS LABOR PROBLEMS ON THE RAILWAY.

3. NEW RAIL LINK WITH SOUTH AFRICA. MINISTER NXUMALO TOLD ME THAT THE SWAZI CABINET HAD DECIDED TO BUILD A NEW RAIL LINE FROM PHUZUMOYA STATION TO GOLELA TO LINK UP WITH THE SOUTH AFRICAN RAIL SYSTEM; THIS WOULD GIVE SWAZILAND AN ALTERNATIVE OUTLET FOR ITS EXPORTS THROUGH THE PORT OF RICHARD'S BAY AND REDUCE DEPENDENCE ON MOZAMBIQUE. SOUTH AFRICA HAS AGREED TO THIS PROPOSAL ANY MAY DO THE FEASIBILITY STUDY. NXUMALO OBSERVED THAT THE PRC IS GAINING INFLUENCE IN MOZAMBIQUE. HE NOTED THAT AFRICAN STATES DO NOT ALWAYS COOPERATE. THEREFORE, SWAZILAND WANTED TO KEEP ITS OPTIONS OPEN. HE ADDED THAT SWAZILAND WAS MORE LIKELY TO MAINTAIN GOOD RELATIONS WITH SOUTH AFRICA AND MOZAMBIQUE IF IT WAS NOT SOLELY DEPENDENT ON EITHER FOR AN OUTLET TO THE SEA. NXUMALO ADDED THAT SWAZILAND WAS ALSO DEVELOPING ITS COAL RESERVES IN THE SOUTH AND THEREFORE NEEDED AN ALTERNATIVE TO DEPENDENCE ON MOZAMBIQUE PORTS.

4. SOUTH AFRICAN LINK WITH EXISTING SWAZILAND RAIL SYSTEM. NXUMALO NOTED THAT THE KADAKE-MATSAPHA RAIL LINK WILL BECOME UNECONOMIC WHEN THE GYWENYA IRON ORE MINE CLSOES DOWN IN A FEW YEARS. HE SAID THAT SOUTH AFRICA HAS AGREED INFORMALLY TO EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITY OF LINKING UP WITH THE NGWENYA IRON ORE MINE RAIL TERMINUS; SUCH A LINK WOULD GIVE BOTH SWAZILAND AND SOUTH AFRICA AN ADDITIONAL TRANSPORT OUTLET TO MOZAMBIQUE; IT COULD MAKE THE PORT OF LOURENCO CONFIDENTIAL

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MARQUES MORE PROFITABLE. NXUMALO SAID HE HAD NOT DISCUSSED THIS MATTER WITH FRELIMO AUTHORITIES AND APPARENTLY HAS NOT INTENTION OF DOING SO AT THIS STAGE.

5. INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT. NXUMALO SAID THAT PROPOSAL FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT AT MPAKA WOULD BE SUBMITTED TO KING SOBHUZA NEXT WEEK FOR APPROVAL. HE SAID THE CONSULTANT HAD ARGUED THAT SUCH AN AIRPORT WOULD

NOT BE ECONOMIC. NXUMALO SAID THERE WERE PERSUASIVE POLITICAL ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT OF THE PROJECT SINCE SWAZILAND WAS A LANDLOCKED COUNTRY. IN HIS VIEW, SUCH AN AIRPORT WAS EQUALLY IMPORTANT AS HAVING AN ARMY; IT ENHANCED SWAZILAND'S SECURITY BY INSURING ADDITIONAL INTERNATIONAL OUTLETS. NXUMALO ADDED THE SWAZI CABINET DECIDED SOME TIME AGO TO ESTABLISH AN AIRLINE.

6. ROAD TRANSPORT LINK WITH SOUTH AFRICA. NXUMALO NOTED THAT SOUTH AFRICAN RAILWAYS TRUCKS AND BUSES CARRIED ALL THE GOODS FROM THE RAILHEAD IN SOUTH AFRICA TO SWAZILAND. HE INFORMED ME THAT SOUTH AFRICA HAD ACCEPTED A SWAZI PROPOSAL FOR TAKING OVER THE ROAD TRANSPORT LINK WITH SOUTH AFRICAN RAILHEADS. A ROAD TRANSPORT BOARD HAS ALREADY BEEN CREATED. THE IRANIANS HAVE EXPRESSED AN INTEREST IN FINANCING THE PROCUREMENT OF MERCEDES-BENZ TRUCKS AND BUSES. NXUMALO SAID THE CANADIANS HAD ALSO EXPRESSED A WILLINGNESS TO SUPPORT THE PROJECT PROVIDED THE BOARD WAS OWNED AND OPERATED BY THE GOVERNMENT. NXUMALO INDICATED THAT SWAZILAND HAS A FREE ENTERPRISE SYSTEM AND THAT HE WAS PERSONALLY OPPOSED TO THE CANADIAN APPROACH.

7. COMMENT. SWAZI DECISION DEVELOP ALTERNATIVES TO DEPENDENCE ON MOZAMBIQUE PORTS REFLECTS HIGH-LEVEL CONCERN ABOUT PROSPECTS FOR STABILITY IN MOZAMBIQUE AND INCREASING INFLUENCE OF COMMUNIST STATES. SWAZIS CLEARLY SEE INCREASING COMMUNIST PRESENCE IN MOZAMBIQUE AS A THREAT TO THE MONARCHY. IF SWAZIS ARE CAUGHT IN MIDDLE OF VIOLENT CONFRONTATION BETWEEN FRELIMO EXTREMIST AND SOUTH AFRICA, THEY ARE LIKELY TO SEEK SOUTH AFRICAN SUPPORT. SWAZIS WILL CONTINUE TO DO WHAT THEY CAN TO EXERCISE A MODERATING
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INFLUENCE IN MOZAMBIQUE; THEY HOPE U.S. AND OTHER LIKE-MINDED STATES WOULD TAKE EFFECTIVE ACTION COUNTER GROWING LEFTIST ORIENTATION IN THE REGION.
BOLEN

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